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461

ON THE ROAD

47

A

*By the same Author.*

THE LOIRE.

WAYS OF ESCAPE.

DREAM CITIES.

IT'S AN ILL WIND—.

IN THE TOWN : A BOOK OF LONDON VERSES.

6216nz

# ON THE ROAD

*A Book of Travel Songs*

By  
DOUGLAS GOLDRING

170448  
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London

SELWYN AND BLOUNT

27 Chancery Lane, W.C.

1916



OF the verses contained in this book twelve are here published for the first time; a few have been printed in various periodicals, such as "The Academy," "Poesia," and "Poetry" (Chicago); and the remainder are taken from an early volume now unobtainable.



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I



## I

## ROADS

Long roads that stretch out hard and white,  
Long roads that climb into the sky,  
They haunt me in this London night :  
I knew them well in days gone by—

Knew them and loved them ! Bright they  
shone—  
They led to that enchanting land,  
Where all the throneless gods live on  
And where men go, *who understand* ;

Where hills too lovely to be true  
Rise dazzling, in diviner air,  
And under heavens for ever blue  
Love grows to friendship fine and rare !

Far from a bitter world of toil  
They led, those roads of long ago :  
They climbed the skies to fairy soil,  
They glittered like a line of snow.

1910.

## BEAUGENCY-SUR-LOIRE

A strong stroke, and the boat leaps, and the  
heart grows merry !

But I think of a little farm slid by, and a dark  
girl at the ferry.

The sun dies, and a bird cries, and a bright  
star's gleaming :

And I afloat, and all alone, with the long  
night for dreaming. . . .

A strong stroke, and the boat leaps, and the  
stream swirls under ;

And here am I by the still white town, in  
a sad, hush'd wonder.

Lovers sigh and the leaves sigh—and bright  
eyes peeping :

A boy laughs and a girl laughs . . . and ah !  
who's weeping ?

1912.

### III

## JUILLAC-LE-COQ

(*Charente*)

It's to Juillac-le-coq, where the vines stretch  
o'er the plain,  
And the little streams are running *eau-de-vie* and sweet champagne,  
That I'd take my pipe and smoke it, sitting  
on some garden wall,  
And kick my heels and dream my dreams,  
and never work at all.

*For the sun's bright, and the moon's bright,  
and all the women's eyes  
Are bright there ; and joy's there, and love  
that fools despise.*

It's a little dusty village, full of laughing  
men and girls ;  
At the thought of it my breath comes short,  
my tired brain spins and whirls.

I must tramp along and find it, choose my  
sunny whitewashed wall,  
And sing my songs, and dream my dreams,  
and never work at all.

*There are vines there, and wines there, and  
straight, long, dazzling ways  
That shine white, on a fine night, when high  
the full moon sways.*

1910.

## IV

### LOUISE

*(Dinan)*

We have eaten our mid-day meal. The wide  
green blinds

Have hushed the room with their shade.

The doves coo over the porch ; and the old  
dog grinds

His bone, by the gardener's spade.

Louise is outside in the Dairy. Her quiet  
hands

Are cool with the butter and cream ; she  
is tireless and strong.

There are ever so many things that she  
understands,

And nothing she has to do with seems to  
go wrong !

And she is so clean—Louise—so calm and kind.

I wish I could guess her thoughts. (They are like the doves,

And, all day, fly in and out of her tranquil mind.)

I wonder why she is sad and who it is she loves? . . .

1914.

V

IN PICARDY

Waves lap the beach, pines stretch to meet  
the sea—

A pale light on the horizon lingers and shines  
That might shine round the Graal : and we  
Stand very silent, underneath the pines.

Oh, swift expresses for the spirit's flight !  
Sometimes the moon is like a maid I know,  
Looking roguishly back and flying forward  
—so

I follow, flashing after. Blessed night !

1912.

## BARCELONA

A squalid station, tramcars, dusty palms  
In a great square; and then the surging streets  
That cut the town in two, where its heart  
beats !

Crowds jostle to and fro, brats cadge for  
alms,

Sell lottery tickets, hand their sister's card  
(With her address, nude photograph and  
hours) ;

Men offer little birds, old women flow'rs ;  
Red-coated guards loaf by; a half-blind bard  
Drones out stale tunes ; and amorous ladies  
stare

(Clad in rich clothes, with very bad black  
eyes)

At men with Brownings bulging at their  
thighs

Who'll fight for a Republic—when they dare.

1914.

VII

VENICE

To come so soon to this imagined dark—  
More velvet-deep than any midnight park !  
Palaces hem me in with blind black walls ;  
The water is hush'd for a voice that never  
calls.

My gondolier sways silently over his oar.

1912.

## VIII

### MADONNA DELLA SALUTE

The little waves zip-zip beneath our boat,  
Laugh round it, bear us away :  
And look—ah, Madonna della Salute !

The moon sweeps o'er the church with trailing robe,  
Covering in silver gauze the enchanted dome ;  
The blue night fold it in, with arms of pride.

Now is the Grand Canal a silver lane,  
(And you—oh, you in my arms again,  
And nothing else, Love, in the world beside !)

Madonna, ah, Madonna—hold us safe. . . .

1912.

## IX

### CALLE MEMO O LOREDAN

We were staying (that night) in a very old  
palace—

Very dark, very large, and sheer to the  
water below.

The rooms were silent and strange, and you  
were frightened :

The silver lamp gave a feeble, flickering  
glow

And the bed had a high dark tester and  
carved black posts,

And behind our heads was a glimmer of  
old brocade.

Do you remember ? you thought the shadows  
were full of ghosts,

And the sound of the lapping water made  
you afraid.

Ah, and your face shone pale, in the gleam of  
that quivering flame !

And your bosom was rich with the round  
pearls row on row ;

And you looked proud and jewelled, and  
passionate without shame—

Like some Princess who stooped to her  
lover, a long while ago.

1912.

## X

## UNDER-HILL HOUSE

I remember so well how the table looked,  
that night!

The shaded candle-flames were gentle and  
bright—

Caressing the wine and silver. Jewels glowed  
And bosom and wrist moved softly. Light  
words flowed,

And the surface chatter of dinner ran joyously  
on.

Then you told me of your dream cities—  
that Venice was one,

And looking up quickly, at eyes now gray,  
now blue,

(For Venice belongs to me, as well as to you)  
I thought for a moment, I saw your soul  
shine through !

Is it odd for an hour's companion to think  
such things ?

Swift ? But, Dear, see—how Love and the  
Soul have wings !

1912.

## TO —

Eyes blue (or grey) that flash for strange  
    sorrows and joys,  
Eyes soft as two doves, that can be very  
    proud ;  
Carriage of head that thinks well of itself,  
    and is never cowed ;  
A gay mouth, firm bosom and stride like a  
    boy's !

I have loved you in Venice, and sometimes  
    I love you in Rome,  
On a hillside there (of the Seven) when a day  
    dies red  
As blood, as love, as a torn heart bleeding  
    and dead.  
I think I have waited you always ; and will  
    you come ?

1912.

## IN FRANCE

*A St. Blaise, à la Zuecca ! Oh, my dear,  
Laugh your gentle laughter ! This old land,  
From Provence to Paris—never fear—  
All the heart can feel will understand.*

A clean town, a white town,  
A town for you and me—  
With a little café in the square,  
And schooners at the quay ;  
And the *terrasse* of a small hotel  
That looks upon the sea !

There gay sounds and sweet sounds  
And sounds of peace come through—  
The cook sings in the kitchen,  
The idle ring-doves coo :  
And Julien brings the Pernods  
That are bad for me and you !

*A St. Blaise, à la Zuecca ! Oh, my dear,  
Laugh your gentle laughter ! This old land,  
From Provence to Paris—never fear—  
All the heart can feel will understand.*

## XIII

### VOYAGES

Do you remember, have you been these ways,

Dreaming or waking, after sunny days ;  
Sailed, in a moment, to imagined lands—  
With one to love you, holding both your hands—

To old hot countries where the warm grape clings,

And a soft, musical language strikes the ear  
Like a caress, most exquisite to hear—  
Your soul the voyager and your heart her wings ?

1914.

## II



## THE POPLARS

Oh fluttering hand, so white and warm and  
shy,

Oh dark eyes dazzled by a prisoned beam  
Stol'n from the moon ! Oh tremulous heart's  
cry,

From lips new-parted in some childish  
dream !

See, Dear, the poplars tremble ! They are  
very tall,

They stand like pillars against the darkling  
sky,

And over the little lake their shadows fall . . . .

See, through the gloom, the great white  
swans glide by.

If you can love this little, why not all ?

Ah ! brooding mouth that never will tell me  
why. . . .

Oh, it is still, out here, under the starry  
glow !

Your lips to mine you give, and my hand is  
in yours,

And your body is mine if I wish it . . . and  
yet, I know

That the treasure I want you deny,  
And the heart of you, soul of you, keep !

I would know why you lift your head of a  
sudden, like this,

And turn it (so finely poised) till the light  
picks out

The shape of your moulded neck, of your  
hair so sweet to kiss,

And the line of your forehead and nose and  
lips that pout.

Now are they blue as night, your veiled large  
eyes,

But pale fire lights them, fire o' the moon.  
Oh, why do you gasp, with little tangled  
cries,

And why do you seize my hand to let it fall  
so soon ?

1911.

## IN SUSSEX

The deer stand outlined on a sky  
That glows to red and pales to green :  
The restless pine trees shake and sigh,  
And troubled spirits moan, unseen.

A brooding quiet holds the night.  
It is the hour of dreams, of fears,  
When day's defiant dying light  
Fades to the sombre note of tears.

We hardly talk, we hardly dare—  
Our steps are noiseless on the grass ;  
The shadows haunt your eyes and hair.  
Does love pass as these moments pass ?

1910.

## XVI

### OXFORD

(*On the Cherwell*)

Under the willows drooping down,  
The silent punt sped swiftly on ;  
While o'er the fields and o'er the town  
The great moon flashed and shone.

And Oxford, in a silver glow,  
Lay tranced and dreaming in her sleep :  
Her roofs and towers bright as snow,  
Her waters black and deep.

The life that they had known so long  
Seemed now a strange, a far-off thing,  
For they had heard the haunting song  
That once a god would sing :

And they had caught a glimpse of lands  
Back o' the moon, and seen that light  
Which holds shy lovers in its hands  
And charms the groping night.

Under the willows drooping down,  
Ever the silent punt sped on ;  
While o'er the fields and o'er the town  
The great moon flashed and shone.

1907.

## SEAFORD

(*March Winds*)

“ I never will see you again,  
Nor go walking with you, nor be friends ;  
You have rumpled my hair in the rain—  
This foolishness ends !  
You can carry your kisses elsewhere :  
*I call it low*  
To paw one about like a bear—  
You can go ! ”

“ Oh, you baby, to take it like that—  
Why, you’d better sit down in the shelter  
And polish your shoes on the mat—  
I’m off to the downs, helter-skelter !  
For it’s Heaven to race in the wind,  
With the rain in your eyes, on your cheek,  
And perhaps, on the top of the hill, by the  
cliff, I shall find  
A fairy will speak ! ”

“ Oh, yes, there are fairies up there,  
With faces fresh in the dew—  
The wild wind kisses their wild long hair,  
And they run by the side of you.

“ I’m sorry you’re angry, like this,  
But I don’t think I want to be friends—”

“ If I gave you your kiss—  
Would *that* make amends ? ”

1907.

## XVIII

### SCHOOL

Why, Jack, those times are far away  
When you and I, each summer day,  
Retreated from the cricket ground  
And wandered where the river wound  
Amid deep meadows, willow-lined ;  
And when we two, on mischief set,  
Snug in the cool lush grass reclined  
And smoked the ambrosial cigarette !

O we were happy, you and I,  
When underneath a cloudless sky  
We went adventuring through the lanes  
To Leez, or to the farm at Danes' ;  
Or sought the pathway to the mill  
To see if Dolly loved us still,  
And took her with us up the stream—  
Three children, in a land of Dream.

While others strove for House or School,  
We'd go to find the Alder's Pool,  
And swim to Brave Boy's Leap, and run  
Shining and shameless in the sun.  
For us the reedy riverside,  
The long deep meadows stretching wide,  
The lazy cows, the sheltering trees,  
The lark's shrill song, the hum of bees,  
Were joys the arid cricket field  
With all its triumphs could not yield.

Alas ! how long ago it seems  
When we two walked by Essex streams.  
My hair is getting sadly thin,  
And you . . . have grown a double chin !

1909.

## XIX

### THE VOICES

“ Oh, hear them in the Valley—  
The wailing voices cry !  
They count the yearly tally  
Of lost girls that must die.  
Cold fingers, in the gloaming,  
Will grope one night for me ;  
I daren’t go heather-roaming  
For fear the ghosts will see.

“ And now the rain is falling,  
They’ll cry the whole long night,  
I tremble at their calling—  
O take and hold me tight !  
Each of those warning spirits  
Was once a girl, betrayed ;  
O love, be true and kind to me  
Who am no more a maid.”

1909.

## CHRISTMAS

Far would I be from home and common  
sights,

Far from the gluttonous orgy that delights  
The greedy schoolboys and their ponderous  
sire—

If I had my desire ;

Out of the reach I'd be of Christmas-trees,  
Of tedious gifts and stale formalities,  
And all dear England's crude festivities—  
On Christmas Day.

I would be in some sun-bathed Latin town,  
Haunted by ghosts of happier ages dead,  
With one dear comrade's loving voice to  
drown

All memory of the country we have fled.  
Here, in an ancient church, lofty and dim,

Sweet with stored incense of a thousand  
years,  
I fain would listen to the children's hymn  
And pour, like them, my tale of hopes and  
fears  
Into Christ's ears.

1907.

## XXI

### TO —

I walked the dusty, crowded road,  
With merry comrades by my side :  
Brave in the sun we swung along  
For we were young, the world was wide.

But in the silent, star-bright night,  
When song and story both were done,  
Sadly I lay me down to sleep  
For I was restless and alone.

Although my friends were many, yet  
I knew not one to whom to say :  
“ I love you with my whole soul’s might ! ”  
But that—Dear Heart—was yesterday.

1910.

XXII

THE EXILE

Sick am I of work and pleasure, of the smell  
of smoke and scent,

Sick of women, of each kind or hungry  
face,

Utterly at war with toiling for a coin so  
quickly spent :

And I want to sleep and dream, in a green  
place.

There'll be cowslips in the meadows, and the  
stream behind the farm

Will be fringed with long rich grass and  
golden flowers :

And O ! to see my home again, when sum-  
mer suns shine warm,

Will be Heaven after London's dreary  
hours.

1909.

## XXIII

### SONG

Now slants the moonlight through the trees  
And bathes the pathway through the wood :  
The large leaves wrangle in the breeze  
And sigh, as if they understood.

Dear Heart, it is so still and warm,  
—A lovelier night there has not been—  
But lonely I have left the farm,  
And lonely I have crossed the green.

1910.

XXIV

MORITURA

Leave the radiant sun,  
    Of drowsy rest the giver ;  
Leave the song of the birds and leave  
    The sob of the river.

Break loose from his passionate arms,  
    And awake from thy dream of bliss :  
King Death hath marked thy charms  
    And fain would kiss.

1902.

## SONG

Sang a maid at peep o'day  
To the blackbird in the yew—  
“ My true heart has flown away,  
Seeking other heart as true.”

“ Bird, my heart has taken wings,”  
Whispered she, with wistful eyes :  
“ In the raging wind it sings,  
In the sun it cries, it cries.”

1910.

## XXVI

### COMRADES

We roam the spacious wind-blown hills  
And live the vagrom life we love ;  
We tramp where'er the spirit wills—  
The blue and boundless sky above.

We hear the secrets of the wood,  
The soft, low laughter of the streams,  
And O, for us, the world is good,  
For we have found our Land of Dreams !

1910.

XXVII  
YOUTH'S QUEST

Past the wide cottage door,  
    Where the wife's at her mending,  
Past the barn or the store,  
    Which the husband is tending,  
Past the church, past the Inn  
    Where the landlord lolls drinking,  
In silence I tramp  
    Till the red sun is sinking.

Then over the hill,  
    While the moon is yet young  
I wander, until  
    My beloved has sung—  
The nightingale lyric with love.  
  
Then I move  
    From the wideness that stretches so far,  
    The boundless, disturbing and terrible down  
To the warmth of the town  
    And the joys of the street and the bar :  
    Longing and hoping ; afraid,  
    Dreaming of love.

## XXVIII

### JUNE

The clasped hand, the low laugh and the  
trill of love,

Intimate whisper and long look and sinking  
head

That sinks but to be captured, while, above,  
The stars stand motionless, the tree seems  
dead.

Cold, in the stillness, looks the thin moon  
down ;

Far off are murmuring sea and restless town—  
As far as life and death and common things—  
For two to-night know joy, a joy that sings.

## THE KISS

Cold it was, Dear, when you kissed me.  
Still I hear the steady drips  
Of the wet from leaves and branches,  
As we stood beneath the tree :  
I can feel your arms about me,  
And your lips upon my lips,  
And it's you alone I dream of,  
Though you've soon forgotten me.

### XXX

## THE BRAVE LOVER

She wandered by the river's brink,  
Her stricken heart stood still :  
She listened for his hastening step  
With mind to win or kill.

From Ipswich up to London town  
Long days, long nights walked she :  
And now had tracked the soldier down  
Who caused her shame to be.

She could not breathe, her throat grew dry,  
Her soldier looked so brave and strong :  
“ Why Moll, my girl ”—she heard him cry—  
“ What brings you here along ? ”

“ From Ipswich, Dick, I've brought the son,”  
She moaned, “ your broken promise gave.”  
He looked and laughed : “ Poor little one !  
I've used you ill, I have.”

She sank, and saw him smile good-bye—  
    She who had thought to kill or win.  
He was too fine, too bold to die,  
    The weak must suffer for his sin.

# **III**



## THE SINGER'S JOURNEY

## i

On the closed door I knocked and knocked again.

It was so cold without : the wind and rain  
Buffeted me, and made me sick and sore,  
And no birds sang, and night came on, and  
o'er

The surging wind rose pitiful sad cries  
From all the souls cast out of Paradise . . .  
On the closed door I knocked and knocked again

Till I grew tired with bitterness and pain.  
I made no fine resolve, I shed no tear :  
I knew that God was good, that she was dear,  
Only I wondered why these things had been,  
Why I was glad I loved, that she had seen.  
She was too pure to care, perhaps too cold,  
So, in the wilderness I should grow old,

With but the memory of her wide grave  
eyes

To comfort me, shut out from Paradise.

On the closed door I knocked and knocked  
again,

And suddenly it opened on a chain

And I peered close, and eager looked inside—

Then turned me to the world that waited,  
wide :

'Twas not for pride I suffered, not for sin ;  
I was barred out to let a loved one in.

ii

And so from Paradise I turned my feet :

The wide world called me, and I ran to meet  
The salutations of the wind and rain,

That swept across a desolate, sad plain.

Then called the mountains and the grassy  
hills,

Broad seas and rivers, and small tinkling  
rills :

And there were forests wonderful and dark,

And when the shrill wind ceased, sweet sang  
the lark.

And I forgot lost love, in pleasant places,  
For I found other heavens, and sweeter faces  
Smiled from the lake, or laughed behind the  
reeds,

—But in the night the heart that's stricken  
bleeds.

Then once at dawn-time, by a quiet pool,  
A goat-legged fellow cried : “ Come hither,  
fool,

And learn the tune that makes the world  
roll round :

“ Life, lust and laughter mingle in the sound:  
’Twas made with longing and with tears and  
fire,

“ But laughter conquered it, and mocked  
desire.”

And then he took his pipe, this goat-legged  
man,

And all the winds cried : “ Hark, the song of  
Pan :

Pan who is god of flocks and herds, who  
dwells

Deep in the woods a-weaving curious spells  
And tunes that sob for joy, that thrill and  
weep—

That charm to laughter and that soothe to  
sleep.”

iii

And bye and bye Pan made a flute for me,  
And when I took the flute I seemed to see  
Visions of bodied-thoughts, gay-clothed or  
dark,

And each thought made a sound : and some  
the lark

Took for his song—the gayest did he take—  
But I for mine took sombre ones, to make  
A mournful wail for my lost love, but while  
I sang I did forget my grief and smile.

And then the sweetness of the tunes I made  
Thrilled me, and sorrow vanished and I  
    played

Enraptured, with the sounds that charmed  
    me best;

And I made songs for pleasure, while the  
    West

Crimsoned behind the dark, enchanted woods.  
Still by the silent pool, in varying moods,  
All night beneath the stars I laughed and sang  
And through the shadows joyful echoes rang,  
And presently dryads slipt from tree to tree ;  
Nymphs from the field and stream crept  
    close to me

And stealthy satyrs ; and web-footed men  
Climbed from the lake ; and from a fairy  
    glen

Came trooping little people with bright eyes,  
Who listened while I made them melodies.

Then slender women, with white limbs and  
hair

Dusky as night, sought out my reedy lair  
To hear my singing, and the loveliest one  
Lay in my arms until the night was done.

• • • • •

Thus have I quite forgotten God and found  
Joy in this world that tumbles round and  
round,

And a new Heaven I know, new faith I hold :  
And I shall have my songs when I am old.

1909.

## HEART AND SOUL

The worn heart called the soul that flew,  
That soared on high, with fiery wing :  
“ Once in a house of flesh, we two  
Dwelt silent, sorrowing.

“ I fled you for all false delights,  
Sister, I let you sleep and fade,  
While in the breathless summer nights  
With deathly joys I played.”

The tired heart wailed and sank and died,  
Died terribly, a thousand deaths :  
Strange things that passed like wild-birds  
cried ;  
The ghosts drew icy breaths.

“ Too late ! My jewel, Bird of Hope,  
You slipt my grasp : now firm and free  
You soar to that Olympian slope  
Where every soul would be—”

The dead voice failed ; the soul flew by,  
Nor turned her course, nor dropped her  
wing :  
A cold wind shivered through the sky :  
The pale ghosts heard her sing.

The sister of the weary heart,  
The bright-winged bird, the bird of fire,  
Flew onwards swiftly and apart,  
*Towards the heart's desire.*





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